

Brief Statement on Rescue Recording of an Eroding Inter-Tidal Peat Bed Containing Prehistoric Worked Timber and Human and Animal Footprints

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Staff from Archaeological Research Services Ltd undertaking cleaning and recording work, December 2010.

Archaeological Research Services Ltd



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Summary Statement

Staff from Archaeological Research Services Ltd undertook recording of an inter-tidal peat deposit at Low Hauxley, Northumberland, between the 21st and 23rd December 2010. The work comprised the cleaning (using hand tools) and planning of an area of footprints of both animal and human origin, along with extensive digital photography of the deposit and its context.

The site lies in the intertidal zone and work was limited to a period from first light until the early afternoon, which lasted around 6 hours each day. The deposit, which was fully exposed on the first day, was covered by an increasing spread of sand over the following two days from the seaward side, although an almost complete record was made, prior to it being re-buried. A visit to the site on the 4th Jan 2011 and several subsequent visits throughout January and February 2011 showed that the site has been completely buried again to around 0.3-0.4m in depth. The site will only be revealed again during, or after, storm conditions which is likely to further damage or completely remove what is left of the site.

Due to the weather conditions the deposit was frozen solid, although strong sun on the 22nd December did thaw the top few millimetres. This allowed extraction of small stones, shells and sand from the footprints without too much difficulty and with no removal of the surrounding peat. The footprints were generally quite smooth in appearance and have already been eroded by the sea to the extent that, in some instances, it was difficult to ascertain whether depression were footprints, or were perhaps created when pieces of timber have eroded from the deposit. A full plan at a scale of 1:10 was made of the whole deposit which indicates the three dimensions of each print (length, width and depth) as well as a direction of travel where apparent. It was unclear during the recording process how, exactly, most of the prints matched up into potential tracks, although there were a couple of instances where this was clear (see attached photograph). Clear indications of human footprints, as well as animals with cloven-feet (see attached photographs) were abundant across the deposit. The deposit was surveyed in using a Leica TC307 total station and mapping-grade GPS to ensure accurate dimensions and heights OD were recorded.

Six pieces of substantial (in excess of 0.15m length) timber were noted in the surface of the deposit, although it was not clear from examination whether these had been worked or not. One is thought to most likely be a tree root/stump, given the presence of many smaller rootlike timbers in the immediate area. However, other pieces of timber are considered more likely to have been worked, given their shape, although this is not definitively the case.

A sample of twigs was taken from immediately below the surface of the deposit for radiocarbon dating.

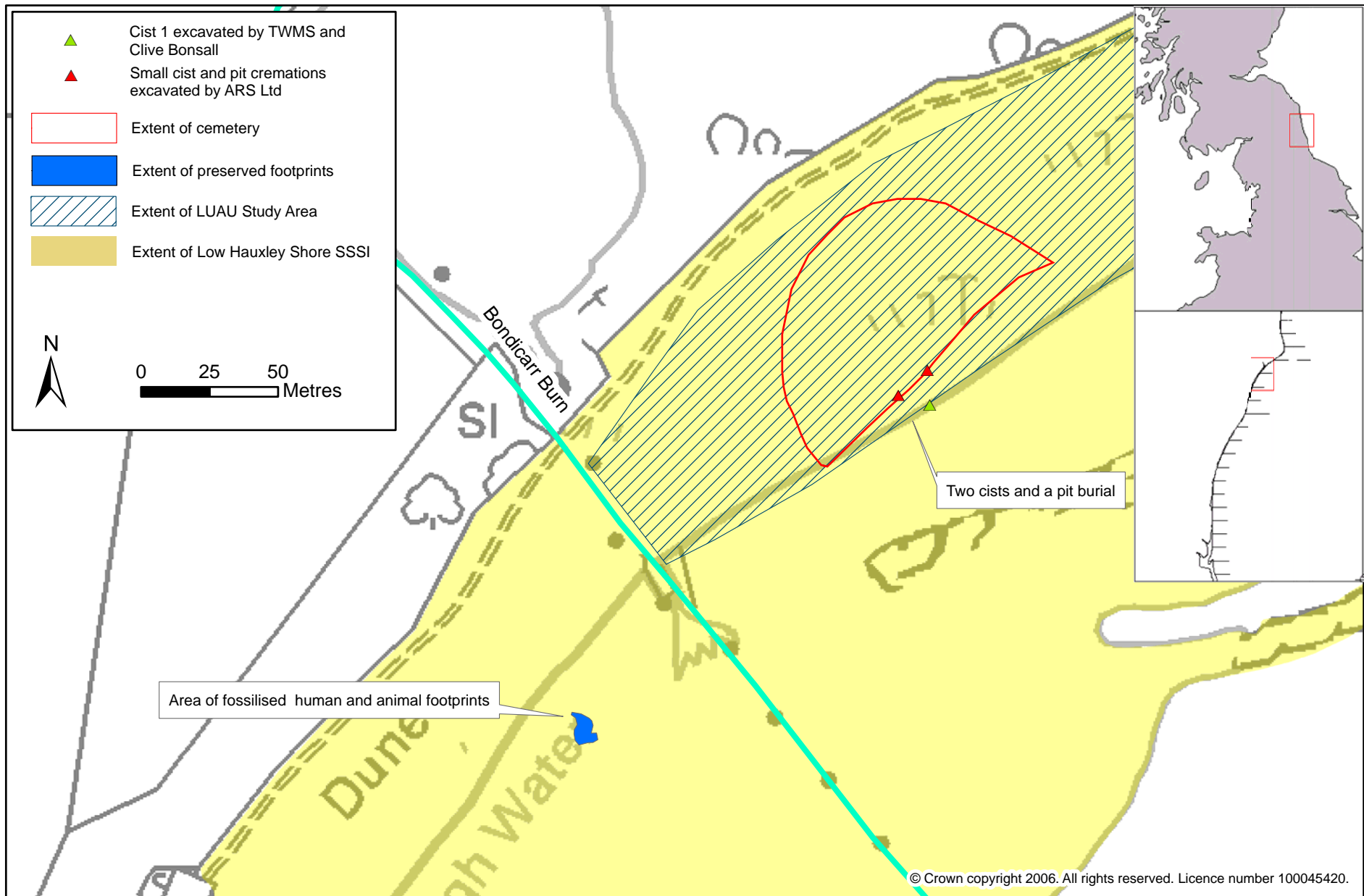


Figure 1 Location map of peat deposit at Low Hauxley with extent of cist cemetery to north outlined



Photograph looking south-west across the peat layer with Archaeological Research Services Ltd staff undertaking rescue recording work

Area not recorded, but very few definite footprints

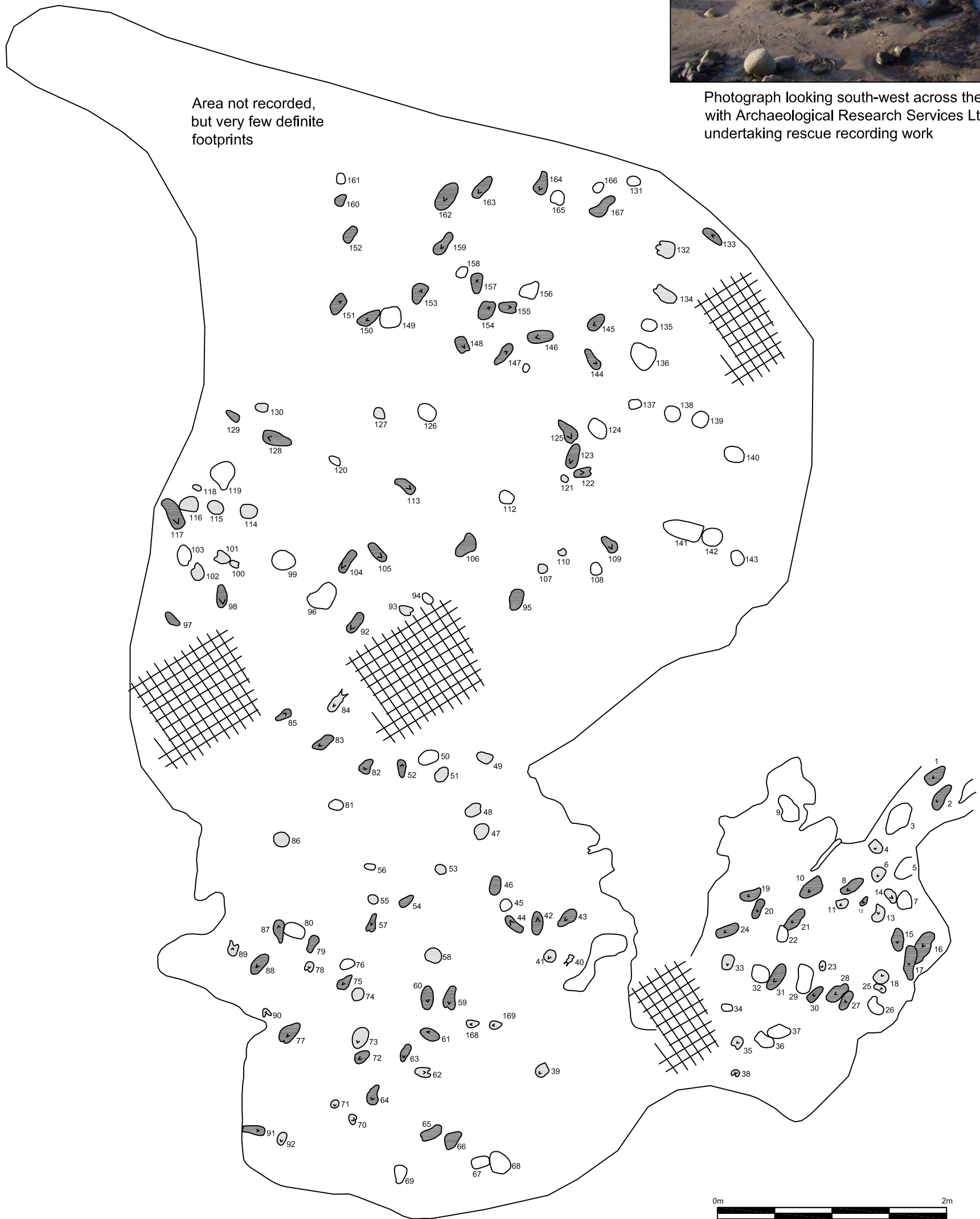


Figure 2: Plan of peat showing animal and human footprints

Key:	
	Animal print
	Human print
	Area of deeper sand filling hollow in the peat
	Approximate direction of travel

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Figure 3 Photograph of human footprint track. Direction of travel is towards the camera



Figure 4 Cloven footprint in centre with probable heel print from human at the top of the photograph

Table 1 All recorded hollows in peat deposit, maximum dimensions are given.

Footprint No	Human/Non-human/Unknown	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)
1	Human	230	130	40
2	Human	300	120	70
3	Unknown	320	280	80
4	Animal	130	140	30
5	Unknown	290	150	50
6	Animal	160	120	50
7	Unknown	190	130	50
8	Human	170	80	20
9	Unknown	160	150	50
10	Human	280	140	30
11	Animal	120	130	30
12	Human	90	40	20
13	Animal	190	120	60
14	Animal	150	90	40
15	Human	220	120	40
16	Human	250	140	20
17	Human	290	90	60
18	Animal	240	130	90
19	Human	200	100	20
20	Human	220	100	40
21	Human	250	110	40
22	Unknown	190	120	50
23	Animal	130	70	30
24	Human	230	100	40
25	Animal	130	60	80
26	Unknown	200	120	100
27	Human	190	100	50
28	Human	210	110	50
29	Unknown	230	90	45
30	Human	170	70	30
31	Human	300	140	60
32	Unknown	180	150	30
33	Animal	140	100	50
34	Unknown	140	120	50
35	Animal	110	120	60
36	Unknown	180	160	50
37	Unknown	180	150	50
38	Animal	70	80	10
39	Animal	140	120	30
40	Animal	150	50	40
41	Animal	230	120	40
42	Human	200	110	40
43	Human	180	100	50
44	Human	240	90	90
45	Unknown	130	110	40
46	Animal	190	100	90
47	Animal	240	90	50
48	Animal	110	90	50
49	Animal	190	120	70

Footprint No	Human/Non-human/Unknown	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)
50	Unknown	210	130	90
51	Animal	180	120	30
52	Human	220	100	90
53	Animal	80	100	50
54	Human	160	100	90
55	Animal	120	90	50
56	Unknown	130	70	60
57	Human	80	70	40
58	Animal	130	140	60
59	Human	100	80	40
60	Human	210	110	70
61	Human	180	140	80
62	Animal	120	100	70
63	Human	190	100	60
64	Human	200	120	80
65	Human	230	100	90
66	Human	220	130	80
67	Unknown	180	100	90
68	Unknown	200	170	80
69	Unknown	160	110	60
70	Animal	100	80	50
71	Animal	100	100	70
72	Human	160	100	70
73	Animal	230	150	70
74	Animal	180	130	80
75	Human	190	100	80
76	Unknown	200	110	60
77	Animal	200	160	70
78	Animal	130	100	60
79	Human	170	100	50
80	Unknown	210	170	50
81	Unknown	160	150	50
82	Human	160	100	80
83	Human	210	100	100
84	Animal	180	100	50
85	Human	200	90	30
86	Animal	140	150	50
87	Human	200	90	50
88	Human	230	110	70
89	Animal	140	100	40
90	Animal	60	70	40
91	Human	210	100	50
92	Human	230	80	70
93	Animal	140	100	60
94	Unknown	170	100	80
95	Human	200	160	90
96	Unknown	260	260	100
97	Human	150	80	70
98	Human	240	120	80
99	Unknown	230	190	90

Footprint No	Human/Non-human/Unknown	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)
100	Animal	120	70	40
101	Animal	150	120	50
102	Animal	160	160	60
103	Unknown	200	120	80
104	Human	270	90	90
105	Human	270	150	90
106	Human	250	160	50
107	Animal	120	130	60
108	Unknown	130	110	40
109	Human	190	130	80
110	Animal	80	100	50
111	Unknown	160	100	40
112	Unknown	170	130	60
113	Human	220	100	90
114	Animal	190	190	90
115	Animal	190	120	60
116	Animal	200	70	80
117	Human	170	120	60
118	Animal	150	100	70
119	Unknown	190	210	100
120	Unknown	350	90	130
121	Animal	100	80	60
122	Human	180	120	60
123	Human	130	140	80
124	Unknown	200	150	80
125	Human	220	130	80
126	Unknown	240	180	90
127	Animal	170	150	50
128	Human	290	130	100
129	Human	310	70	70
130	Animal	140	120	50
131	Unknown	200	100	30
132	Animal	180	130	70
133	Human	200	100	50
134	Animal	250	180	80
135	Unknown	150	130	70
136	Unknown	290	200	60
137	Unknown	160	120	50
138	Unknown	150	130	50
139	Unknown	180	160	60
140	Unknown	190	160	40
141	Unknown	300	180	50
142	Unknown	230	230	50
143	Unknown	200	140	80
144	Human	200	100	50
145	Human	200	110	50
146	Human	210	130	70
147	Human	220	80	40
148	Human	140	100	60
149	Unknown	170	170	60

Footprint No	Human/Non-human/Unknown	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)
150	Human	210	100	50
151	Human	200	100	40
152	Human	200	100	70
153	Human	200	140	90
154	Human	220	140	80
155	Human	160	120	50
156	Unknown	180	130	70
157	Human	180	90	50
158	Unknown	190	140	60
159	Human	230	120	80
160	Human	150	100	90
161	Unknown	140	100	50
162	Human	300	160	70
163	Human	220	100	50
164	Human	220	130	50
165	Unknown	160	140	40
166	Unknown	120	100	80
167	Human	270	120	50

Project Progress

Table 2 Task list outlining days used to date on project

Task No.	Objective Nos.	Task (see also Gantt Chart)	Performed by:	Days	Used to date
		Project Start-Up and Management			
1	n/a	Project Management and Quality Assurance	CW	2	1
2	n/a	Field recording	BJ PC CS	3 3 1	2 2 1
3	n/a	Brief Assessment and illustration of primary data	BJ PC	1 2	1 1
4	n/a	Updated Project Design	BJ	2	1

Days and costs currently left over:

CW	1	(245)
BJ	2	(320)
PC	1	(140)

Travel	75
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Sub Total:	780
Unit Overhead @25%	195

Richard Stroud	350
Unit Overhead @10%	35

Sub Total 2:	1360
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VAT@20%	272
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Gross Total:	1632
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A total of £2715.60 of work has been undertaken on the project to date leaving £1632 in the project budget.

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